

Mrs. Kerr

A BRIEF REVIEW

. . . of the . . .

Women's Suffrage Movement

SINCE ITS BEGINNING

in

1832.

[APRIL, 1911.]

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1832.

HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN PARLIAMENT.

In 1832, the word "male" introduced into the Reform Act (before "person") restricted the Parliamentary franchise to men, and debarred women from its use.

In 1850, Lord Brougham's Act came into operation, which ruled that, in English law, **the word "man" shall always include "woman unless the contrary is expressly stated."**

In 1867, John Stuart Mill moved an amendment to the Representation of the People Bill (Clause 4), to leave out the word "man" and substitute "people." This amendment was lost by a majority of 126.

[In 1868, the judges in the Chorlton v. Lings case ruled that in the case of the Parliamentary franchise, **the word "man" does not include "woman"**]

Since 1869, Bills and Resolutions have been constantly before the House of Commons. Debates took place in 1870 (twice), 1871, 1872, 1873, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1883, 1884, 1886, 1892, 1897, 1904, 1905, 1908 (twice), 1910.

During the years when there was no debate on Women's Suffrage, it will be found that the supporters of the movement were either unable to secure a day, or their day was taken by Government business, or by holidays, or the bill or resolution was blocked, or postponed, or crowded out.

Altogether, besides resolutions,

TWELVE BILLS

have been introduced into the House of Commons, and

SIX PASSED THEIR SECOND READING,

i.e., in the years 1870, 1886, 1897, 1908, 1909, 1910. There has been a

MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

declared in favour of Women's Suffrage

SINCE 1886.

Formation of a Suffrage Party.

In 1910, for the first time, a **Women's Suffrage Party** was formed in the House of Commons. Its members were drawn from all parties, Liberal, Unionist, Nationalist, and Labour. Its Chairman was Lord Lytton, and Secretary, Mr. H. N. Brailsford. Its object was to draw up a Bill which should be accepted as a satisfactory compromise by all the political parties. Broadly speaking, the Bill was drafted on lines which enfranchised women occupiers (about one million women). Under this title, the Bill, popularly known as the

"CONCILIATION BILL,"

was introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Shackleton. Two days of Government time were allotted to it, and on July 13th, 1910, it passed its Second Reading by a

MAJORITY OF 110,

a larger majority than the Government got for any of its measures, including the Budget.

The Bill was referred to a Committee of the Whole House, but Mr. Asquith refused to give time for the further stages necessary for its passage into law, and Parliament dissolved in November, 1910.

In the new Parliament, Sir George Kemp (N.W. Manchester) obtained first place in the ballot, and introduced a Women's Suffrage Bill. Drawn up by the "Conciliation Committee," it is nearly the same Bill as that introduced by Mr. Shackleton; but it has been given a more general title, leaving it open to amendment. The Second Reading of this Bill has been fixed for May 5th, 1911.

HISTORY OF THE AGITATION IN THE COUNTRY.

The first Women's Suffrage Societies were founded in Manchester, in London, and in Edinburgh, in 1867, and in Bristol and in Birmingham, in 1868.

These united to form the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

This Union has grown into a large and powerful body, its progress during the last two years being especially remarkable.

In January, 1909, there were 70 affiliated societies ;

In January, 1911, there were 204 affiliated societies ;

And new societies are now being formed every week.

Increase in individual membership has been equally remarkable.

In January, 1909, there were 13,161 members ;

In January, 1911, there were 23,376 members.

Societies of the National Union are now, therefore, in existence in all parts of Great Britain. Some of them work in a considerable number of Parliamentary constituencies, e.g. :—

London W.S. Soc. (4,000 members) works in 70 constituencies.

Manchester	„	(over 600 members)	„	12	„
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Birmingham	„	(700	„)	„	11	„
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Glasgow	„	(550	„)	„	10	„
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Liverpool	„	(600	„)	„	9	„
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Edinburgh	„	(over 800	„)	„	7	„
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Brighton	„	(500	„)	„	7	„
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Many other societies such as Bristol, Nottingham, Leeds, Cardiff, Newcastle, etc., etc., work in four, five, or six constituencies. The National Union, in fact, takes part in all general and by-elections, and regards this part of its work as the most important it has to do, both as propaganda and as a means of bringing pressure to bear upon the Government. Its election policy is to

OPPOSE ITS ENEMIES AND SUPPORT ITS FRIENDS,
and in carrying out this policy it

DISREGARDS ALL PARTIES.

For the purposes of its peaceful propaganda, whether by Public Meetings, Petitions, or other constitutional forms of agitation, the N.U.W.S.S. has, during the past year (1910), alone, raised considerably over

£20,000.

Very large sums have also been raised by other Suffrage Societies, working on different lines.

The N.U.W.S.S. has employed the money it has raised, and the services also of thousands of voluntary workers, in an agitation conducted on perfectly constitutional lines. It has organised meetings and demonstrations, collected signatures to petitions, and by deputations and other means, pressed the question of Women's Suffrage upon the notice both of the Government, of private Members of Parliament, and of candidates for Parliament.

Petitions.

In 1832, Mary Smith of Stramore, Yorkshire, petitioned Parliament for a measure of Women's Suffrage.

In 1851, Lord Carlisle presented a petition to the House of Lords.

In 1866, John Stuart Mill presented to the House of Commons a petition signed by 1,500 women. These signatures were collected in a fortnight.

Since then, petitions and appeals have been presented in extraordinary numbers on behalf of Women's Suffrage.

Between 1851 and 1905,

1,747 PETITIONS

have been presented to the House of Commons, containing

486,747 NAMES.

These have included petitions signed by—

33,184	men textile workers of	Yorkshire,
29,300	„ „ „	Lancashire,
4,300	„ „ „	Cheshire,
8,600	tailoresses of the	West Riding of Yorkshire,
8,000	working-women of	Rosendale, Lancashire,
1,530	Women Graduates,	
600	Women members of	Local Governing bodies,
538	(out of 553)	Women Doctors.

To these must be added an Appeal signed in 1896, by

257,000 WOMEN.

And in 1906, a Declaration signed by **52,000 Women**, chiefly professional and working-women.

In 1909 and 1910, petitions were presented, signed by over

280,000 MEN,

who were all

PARLIAMENTARY VOTERS.

Of these the most remarkable were :—

Barnsley	7,550
Blackburn	6,463
Radcliffe-cum-Farnworth	4,672
Newcastle-on-Tyne	4,500
Portsmouth	4,103

Most striking of all, perhaps, was the petition sent up from the Attercliffe division of Sheffield, at a by-election in May, 1909, which was signed by **5,020 Voters**, while the total poll of the successful candidate was only **3,521 votes**.

To obtain these signatures, work was done in only 250 constituencies, and even in these nothing approaching to a complete canvass could be attempted, owing to the enormous number of workers who would have been required for the work. In most cases, the signatures were obtained on polling-day, by women standing outside the polling-stations and asking the voters to sign as they came out.

In **1911** (February), 1,800 men (electors) of the University of London signed a Memorial to the Prime Minister protesting against the exclusion of women members of the University from the Parliamentary franchise.

Since from this enormous mass of petitions, declarations, memorials, and appeals, the number of whose signatures, by men and women, amounts to

OVER ONE MILLION NAMES,

no measure at all of Women's Suffrage has resulted, the N.U.W.S.S. holds that the value of such petitions has been shown to be very small, and has recently therefore turned its attention to other methods of bringing pressure to bear on the Government.

Public Meetings and Demonstrations.

These have been organised in great numbers. For example :—

In February, 1907, 3,000 women marched in procession in London, from Hyde Park to Exeter Hall.

In October, 1907, 3,000 women marched in procession through Edinburgh.

In October, 1907, 2,000 women marched in procession through Manchester.

In June, 1908, 15,000 women marched in procession in London, from the Embankment to the Albert Hall.

Peaceful demonstrations were also held by other Women's Suffrage Societies.

Public Meetings have been held all over the country by all the Suffrage Societies. It is obviously impossible to enumerate them. We content ourselves with a rough estimate of meetings held in support of the "Conciliation Bill." These (from very incomplete records) amount to, at least,

5,000 MEETINGS

including a Demonstration in Hyde Park, attended by a

QUARTER OF A MILLION PEOPLE,

a Demonstration in Trafalgar Square, attended by **10,000 People**. Also six Albert Hall meetings (two in one week), and Demonstrations held in other cities than London, e.g.—

Manchester (2), Edinburgh, Bristol, Newcastle, Guildford, etc., etc.

These figures include meetings held by the N.U.W.S.S. and by other societies; but leave out of account **Out-door Meetings** held in such numbers as to make even a rough estimate impossible. We can only state that during the summer and autumn of 1910, there were held at least two or three hundred every week.

Growth of the Movement outside the N.U.W.S.S.

Many other Societies have been formed, having Women's Suffrage as their sole object. Such are—

The National Women's Social and Political Union.

The Men's League for Women's Suffrage.

The Women's Freedom League.

The National Industrial and Professional Women's Suffrage Society.

The New Union.

The New Constitutional Society.

The Men's Political Union.

The Church League.

The Free Church League.

The League of Members of the Roman Catholic Communion
(in process of formation).

The League of the Society of Friends (in process of formation).

The Tax-Resistance League.

Besides such groups as the Artists' League, the Suffrage Atelier, the Actresses' Franchise League, the Society of Women Graduates, the Women Writers' Suffrage League, the Younger Suffragists, the Cambridge University Men's League, the London Graduates' Union for Women's Suffrage, the Gymnastic Teachers' Suffrage Society, etc., etc.

There is also the **Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association** and an **Irish Women's Franchise League**.

Within the Political Parties, there have been formed :—

The Forward Suffrage Union (within the Women's Liberal Federation).

The Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association.

The People's Suffrage Federation (which demands the suffrage for all adult men and women).

The following organizations have officially identified themselves with the demand for some measure of Women's Suffrage :—

- The London Liberal Federation.
- The Women's Liberal Federation.
- The Women's National Liberal Association.
- The Welsh Women's Liberal Federation.
- The Independent Labour Party.
- The Fabian Society.

Other Societies have repeatedly petitioned Parliament, or passed resolutions asking for a measure of Women's Suffrage. Among them—

- The National British Women's Temperance Association (110,000 members).
- The Scottish Union of the above (42,000 members).
- The National Union of Women Workers. (The largest Women's Union ; numbers not exactly known).
- The International Council of Women.
- The Association of Headmistresses.
- The Association of University Women Teachers.
- The Incorporated Assistant Mistresses in Secondary Schools.
- The Society of Registered Nurses.
- The Nurses' International Congress.
- The Women's Co-operative Guild (the only organized body representing the married working-women of this country).

Resolutions in favour of the " Conciliation Bill " have been passed by

**49 Trades and Labour Councils, and 36 Trades Unions
and Federations.**

Town Councils declare in favour of Women's Suffrage.

Moreover, during the last six months, many important municipalities have passed resolutions calling upon the Government for some measure of Women's Suffrage. We subjoin a list of these up to date (April, 1911) :—

England.

Lancashire : Manchester, Liverpool, Oldham, Preston, Warrington, Southport.

Yorkshire : Leeds, Sheffield, Hull, Bradford, Huddersfield, Barnsley.

Midlands : Birmingham, Leicester, Nottingham, Burton-on-Trent, Derby.

South-West : Devonport, Falmouth, Truro and Penryn.

Also :—Macclesfield ; Battersea and Stoke Newington ; Folkestone and Ramsgate.

Scotland.

Glasgow,	Broughty Ferry,	Thurso,
Fraserburgh,	Saltcoats,	Kilwinning,
Hawick,	Kirkwall,	Hamilton,
North Berwick,	Stromness,	Inverurie,
Perth,	Haddington,	Brechin,
Arbroath,	Tranent,	Kilmarnock,
Cumnock,	Dundee,	Lerwick.
Inverness,	Forfar.	

Ireland.

Dublin, Cork, and Limerick.

Wales.

Cardiff, Bangor, and Llangollen.

It is to be remembered that these bodies **represent Women as well as Men**, as women already possess the municipal franchise.

Women's Suffrage in other Countries.

The Suffrage Movement has now become world-wide. **The International Women's Suffrage Alliance**, which meets quadrennially, includes societies in Austria, Australia, Belgium, Bohemia, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Gt. Britain, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Cape Colony, Natal, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States.

Women's Suffrage was granted in—

Wyoming, U.S.A.	in 1869	New South Wales	in 1902
Colorado, U.S.A. ..	„ 1893	Tasmania	„ 1903
New Zealand ..	„ 1893	Queensland	„ 1905
South Australia ..	„ 1893	Finland	„ 1907
Utah, U.S.A. ..	„ 1895	Norway	„ 1908
Idaho, U.S.A. ..	„ 1896	Victoria	„ 1909
W. Australia ..	„ 1899	Washington, U.S.A. ..	„ 1910
The Commonwealth of Australia in 1902.			

It will be noticed that all the Australian States have now granted Women's Suffrage. That they have done so proves that they realized its beneficial effects, where they could actually see it in working, as State after State came into line.

ON NOVEMBER 17th, 1910, THE AUSTRALIAN SENATE PASSED THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION :—

“(i.) That this Senate is of opinion that the extension of the Suffrage to the women of Australia for States and Commonwealth Parliaments, on the same terms as men, has had the most beneficial results. It has led to the more orderly conduct of Elections, and at the last Federal Elections, the Women's vote in the majority of the States showed a greater proportionate increase than that cast by men. It has given a greater prominence to legislation, particularly affecting women and children, although the women have not taken up such questions to the exclusion of others of wider significance. In matters of Defence and Imperial concern, they have proved themselves as far-seeing and discriminating as men. Because the reform has brought nothing but good, though disaster was freely prophesied, we respectfully urge that all Nations enjoying Representative Government would be well advised in granting votes to women.

“(ii.) That a copy of the foregoing Resolution be cabled to the British Prime Minister.”

[NOTE.—Paragraph (i.) was carried unanimously ; paragraph (ii.) by 15 votes to 4.]

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ON NOVEMBER
25th, 1910,**

a similar Resolution was passed, in almost identical words.

NOTE.—**In England** (except London) and **Wales**, women already vote for—

County Councillors,	Rural District Councillors,
Town Councillors,	Parish Councillors,
Urban District Councillors,	Board of Guardians.

In London, for—

County Councillors,	Boards of Guardians.
Metropolitan Borough Councillors,	

In Scotland, for—

County Councillors,	Parish Councillors,
Town Councillors,	School Board.

In Ireland, for—

County Councillors,	Rural District Councillors,
Borough Councillors,	Boards of Guardians.
Urban District Councillors,	

In the Isle of Man, women vote for representatives in the House of Keys.

Justice and Logic alike demand that they should be given

THE PARLIAMENTARY VOTE.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ON NOVEMBER

1891

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MAY 1, 1890

AND BY THE SENATE, MAY 1, 1890

AND BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MAY 1, 1890

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THE PARLIAMENTARY VOTE

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